

Wedding Bells

On August 27, 2022, Erin and I stood across from one another in the house of the Lord and made a solemn vow. A vow that for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, we would love and cherish one another until we were parted by death.

And with those words of promise, God set us on a familiar but new path. A path walked before as individuals, now to be tread in the “one flesh” of God’s marriage covenant.

Whatever life throws at us, challenges we face, or joys we experience, we will share them as “one flesh” – one with each other and one with Christ. This sense of “oneness” and promise prompted us to share our latest story from our journey into God’s translation ministry. The story of our first significant choice as a married couple.



Rev. Gary Schulte presiding over the wedding service.

The Burden of Choice

I always figured one of the hardest parts of overseas missions was going to be leaving loved ones behind.

Turns out, for me personally, one of the hardest parts of missions is being faced with a choice.

In my defense, this wasn’t one of those “Netflix or Hulu” sorts of choices. This choice would literally chart the course of Erin, and I’s lives for the next five to forever years. The kind of choice you didn’t want to get wrong but don’t know how to get right.

In our post-modern and Western world, the freedom to choose is seen as a fundamental right of human existence. And yet, within this freedom, where everything can be a choice, including what or who you worship, a person, especially a Christian, can begin to experience discontent. A discontent fueled by the realization that with choice comes ‘mistakes’ and ‘responsibility.’ A responsibility we as humans are fundamentally not prepared for. Perfect example - the choice between country assignments that our supervisor David Federwitz had offered us two weeks earlier.

“So, have you made a decision,” repeated David, likely unaware of the existential angst I was experiencing, “which country will you serve in?”

When I signed up with LBT, I always assumed it would work like most things in life. At some point along the way, we would be told that a choice had been made and a country had been assigned. I had never considered the possibility that my supervisor would sit us down and ask where we wanted to go, but David had done just that. To make matters worse, neither option was a bad one, yet both came with their own risks.

The work in the first option sounded exciting - a people with no Scripture in their language, hungry and aflame for the word of God. The work in the second option sounded like it matched our skill set well – capacity building and scripture engagement in a well-established, locally owned, and driven project. Decisions, decisions...



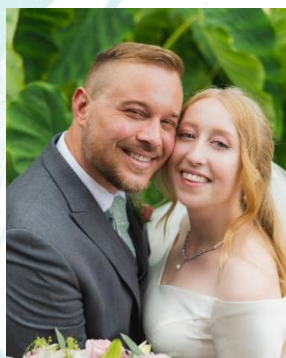
One Heart, Not Two

My heart told me one option, but it wasn't just my heart anymore, was it? Presumably, "one flesh" doesn't mean two hearts, and I don't think vows only apply when the decisions aren't super important. And so, over the next few weeks, I got to practice that "one-heart-ness" with my wife for the first time. Well, at least when it came to a choice more significant than "Netflix vs. Hulu."

As Erin and I discussed and weighed the options, it didn't take long for me to feel like I'd figured out the whole "one-flesh" thing. I was supposed to take care of Erin, sacrifice for her wellbeing, and demonstrate "headship" through my wisdom as a husband and, hopefully, one day, a father. My heart was telling me option one, but my head sensed that the second option would be, in many ways, more manageable for Erin and safer for our future children.

And then, one morning, as we took our weekly 6 A.M. drive to Kansas City for Erin's community outreach work, my wife taught me a valuable lesson about "one-flesh-ness."

"I think we should go to Cameroon," she said as we drove past the exit for Higginsville.



When it comes to making choices, though it can be a burden and not a blessing as our culture promotes it, we Christians are uniquely qualified to make better choices than most, for we have something which the world does not have. God's law to narrow our choices, Jesus' example to guide those remaining choices, and the movement of the Holy Spirit to lead us down paths that love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves.

But ours is a God who also took on real flesh, and so He also gives us more, always more with God! It turns out that when God designed marriage as a blessing, part of what that meant was when He faced you with a choice; it would be alongside a partner who also took seriously their vow to love and to cherish no matter how hard or quite frankly scary, that choice might be. Someone equally committed to the desire to sacrifice their preferences for your benefit.

And so, we told David **Cameroon**, and my burden of choice was at an end. I still don't know if Cameroon was the right choice; who can ever really know, but I know that Erin definitely was.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray for Erin's internship. That she would continue to serve well in the areas she has been assigned and that the "community project" she is developing will impact many hearts and lives.
- Pray for the Subula people of Cameroon, who's hearts are on fire for the Gospel and whom we can't wait to meet and serve.

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